



## COLLEGE FELLOWSHIP

### Frequently Asked Questions

\*Note: This document will be updated during the application period to incorporate responses to written questions submitted to California Volunteers, as per instructions in the RFA.

#### **Student Eligibility**

*1. Are graduate students eligible?*

No, only undergraduate students are eligible to participate in this Fellowship. Seniors can participate during their senior year, but not after graduating.

*2. Are part-time students eligible?*

No, only full-time enrolled students are eligible. The intent of this initiative is to support college completion for all Fellows, so we encourage campuses to align their program design with this goal. We recognize that partner campuses will have different ways to measure full-time status, so the precise threshold will be up to each partner campus.

*3. Are first year students eligible?*

This is up to the partner campus, but could cause challenges in terms of the recruitment timeline. Partner campuses need to report their Fellow recruitment number [to date] for the 2022-2023 cohort by June 2022.

*4. Is there a minimum GPA for eligibility?*

There is not a minimum GPA to participate, although students should be in good academic standing.

*5. Can a student do the program twice?*

This is up to the partner campus; technically it is allowed.

*6. Is any undocumented student eligible?*

AB 540-eligible Dreamers may apply. For Dreamers/AB-540 eligible students, they must meet the requirements outlined by the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) Dreamer Service Incentive Grant Program. More information on eligibility requirements can

be viewed here: <https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/california-dream-act-service-incentive-grant-program-1>.

## Fellow Recruitment

*7. Will partner campuses have to meet a minimum Fellow enrollment target?*

Yes, as part of their application, colleges and universities will need to state their Fellow enrollment target, which should fall within the ranges outlined in Section II A of the RFA. It is imperative that California Volunteers select partner campuses with the capacity to implement this program at the desired scale. This will maximize available state resources through supporting the budgeted number of Fellows (3,250 college students per year). The minimum annual Fellow enrollment target for an individual campus applying directly is 100 Fellows per year. The *collective* minimum annual target for a Consortium of 3 or more campuses applying together (with a Lead Partner) is 200 Fellows per year. Any single campus that is part of a Consortium should commit to enroll at least 50 Fellows per year.

*8. What is the deadline to report Fellow enrollment numbers to California Volunteers?*

The interim deadline to report Cohort 1 Fellow enrollment numbers is June 1, 2022. We hope this number will be close to final, but understand that some changes may occur over the summer so will ask partner campuses to update us again in August 2022 if their Fellow enrollment number has changed.

*9. What happens if a partner campus is unable to reach its target Fellow enrollment numbers?*

If in June 2022 a partner campus is more than 10% below the Fellow recruitment target identified in their initial grant application, California Volunteers will propose a grant amendment process to adjust the amount of funding available for the first year of implementation.

## Service Positions

*10. Is virtual service allowed?*

The intent of this Fellowship is to primarily offer in-person service activities. However, due to the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, partners may include some virtual service options, at least for the first year of implementation (2022-2023).

*11. What are the expected activities of the students?*

Students are expected to support core activities led by the community host organization where they are placed. These activities can include a mix of direct service to community beneficiaries (e.g. tutoring K-12 students, planting trees, serving meals at a Food Bank) and programmatic support to the organization, such as volunteer mobilization, scheduling, or communications. Direct service is key to building cross-cultural understanding and civic responsibility, while programmatic support should be designed to cultivate 21st century employability skills.

*12. Can any of the service positions be with an on-campus partner, for example a campus food pantry?*

Yes, provided the on-campus partner is focused on one of the three Focus Areas and is able to provide Fellows with a meaningful service experience, as described above.

*13. Can any of the service positions be focused on supporting the implementation of the Fellowship?*

Service positions should not focus on the administration of the Fellowship, since California Volunteers is providing separate funding to each partner campus for that purpose. However, campus partners may choose to offer a small number of service positions each year for “Team Leaders.” These 450-hour service positions would include a primary service placement with a community partner organization, as well as a smaller number of hours (within the 450-hour requirement) dedicated to providing support to the Fellowship cohort on their campus as a peer leader / mentor.

*14. Can service hours be completed during the summer or on school breaks?*

This is allowable, as long as the partner campus can ensure proper oversight is in place to support students and verify service completion.

*15. Could a student complete the 450 hours in one semester?*

This is not encouraged, but is allowed, provided there is a strong rationale.

*16. How will service hours be tracked, and who needs to approve?*

Each partner campus will establish its own system for tracking and approving Fellow service hours, which must be verified to ensure eligibility for the Education Award. California Volunteers will consider developing a centralized platform for partner campuses to use for this purpose; more details will be forthcoming.

*17. If a student completes less than 450 hours of service, will they still receive a pro-rated living allowance (stipend) and a pro-rated Education Award?*

Only Fellows who complete the 450-hour service requirement will be eligible for the \$3,000 Education Award; it cannot be pro-rated. With regard to the stipend, students will receive compensation by pay period, which is normally every two weeks. If the student earned any service hours during a particular pay period they are subject to the full stipend amount for that period. We strongly encourage each partner campus to make every effort to maximize Fellow retention, which will be a key metric for securing future funding.

*18. Does completing this Fellowship affect student eligibility for a future, full-time AmeriCorps position?*

In general, individuals are eligible to serve up to four terms of service with AmeriCorps, so this should not be an issue. The only exception would be if a Fellow received an unfavorable performance review by the campus partner, which could disqualify them from serving in future AmeriCorps service positions.

## Community Host Partners

19. *Can students be placed at for-profit organizations?*

No, community host partners must be not-for-profit (NGOs or government).

20. *Are there any other minimal eligibility criteria for community host organizations, e.g. minimum staff size, budget size, or years of operation?*

Community host organizations must have the capacity to host and effectively supervise at least two participating Fellows. In addition, California Volunteers strongly encourages college and university partners to carefully consider an organization's track record and reputation in the community before selecting them as a host organization for your Fellows. Each partner campus will need to follow their own institution's guidelines and policies for establishing MOUs with community host organizations.

21. *Could multiple campuses develop 'blanket' MOUs with one or more community host organizations in their region?*

This may be possible, particularly for partner campuses from the same system and/or in the same region. We encourage college partners to explore this option during the Planning and Program Development Phase.

22. *Will California Volunteers require a common application for community host partners?*

No, each partner campus will design their own application process, though the application must include the minimum eligibility criteria outlined in the RFA. California Volunteers may require one or more statewide orientation sessions for community host partners that are new to the program; more details forthcoming.

23. *How will California Volunteers support the recruitment of new community host partners?*

CV will launch a significant publicity effort in early 2022 to raise awareness about the CaliforniansForAll College Fellowship and encourage local organizations to get engaged. In addition, and where appropriate, CV staff will play a matchmaking role between campus partners and our existing regional or statewide partner organizations that have a successful track record in one or more of the Focus Areas and are interested in hosting Fellows.

## Academic Integration

24. *Is it required that partner campuses offer some form of academic credit to Fellows?*

While this is not required, it is strongly encouraged. Applicants that put forward a compelling proposal for integrating the service experience with student learning and academic outcomes will be favorably considered in the selection process. Again, the focus should be on ensuring timely college completion for all Fellows.

25. *What form could/should academic credit take?*

California Volunteers encourages partner campuses to consider the following options for providing credit: 1) Link to degree programs (e.g. Teacher Preparation, environmental

studies, etc.); 2) Link to existing or new service learning courses; and/or 3) Independent study or internship credit. Regardless of the approach taken, partner campuses should have a strong rationale for how this approach will help ensure that Fellows graduate on time and with less debt. That said, each partner campus should balance the importance of both student outcomes and community outcomes as they finalize their program design.

*26. Can any funding under this grant be used to provide incentives to faculty to get engaged?*

Yes, this is up to the partner campus.

## **Regional Collaboration**

*27. Why is California Volunteers encouraging regional collaboration?*

We see value in regional collaboration, as it has the potential to increase local community impact within shared Focus Areas, facilitate peer learning and exchange for continuous program improvement, and put more money on the ground by consolidating some administrative functions. We see particular value in inter-segmental collaboration to help strengthen the higher education system overall and to ensure strong participation by community colleges.

*28. What are the different models that a regional collaboration can take?*

As outlined in the RFA, applicants may choose from the following models:

- a) Apply as an individual campus and then coordinate with other selected partners from your region during the Planning and Program Development Phase.
- b) Apply as an *inter-segmental* regional Consortium with a Lead Partner (designated legal applicant). In this model, the Lead Partner submits a single application on behalf of the Consortium, and then submits one *College Fellowship Implementation Plan* for the Consortium at the conclusion of the Planning and Program Development Phase. The Lead Partner then manages sub-grants to all of its partner campuses.
- c) Apply as a *single system* - statewide or regional - Consortium with a Lead Partner (designated legal applicant). Again, the Lead Partner would submit a single application on behalf of the Consortium and have the same responsibilities as outlined above.
- d) Apply as a regional collaboration *without* a Lead Partner. In this case, each institution submits their own grant application, but they agree to work together in implementing the College Fellowship if their applications are selected. Applications should include letters of support from partner campuses, as well as an initial description of how these institutions plan to collaborate at the regional level.

*29. Why is California Volunteers offering multiple options for applying?*

Based on input from consultations with many higher education leaders, we decided to leave as much flexibility as possible in the application process. We recognize that in some regions strong inter-segmental collaboration already exists, and in other regions it could prove more challenging. We are eager to see what applicants will propose and hope that this flexibility will spur both innovation and genuine, on-the-ground collaboration.

*30. Can community host partners be part of a Regional Consortium under this grant?*

Community host partners can be part of a Regional Consortium, but not as a direct grantee. Only higher education institutions (or a foundation that represents a higher education institution) are eligible to receive a grant award from California Volunteers as part of this funding opportunity. That said, it is up to the college or university how best to engage their community host partners and whether to offer them any kind of financial support, e.g. example, in the form of a sub-grant. An application from a regional Consortium OR from an individual institution may include a letter of support from one or more community partners that are already committed to hosting Fellows under this program. This is welcome, but not required, in the initial application, since college and university partners will have the opportunity to recruit community host organizations during the Planning and Program Development Phase.

## **Fellow Onboarding and Training**

*31. Will California Volunteers require standardized training for Fellows serving in particular Focus Areas?*

California Volunteers reserves the right to review proposed training methods and content for quality assurance and alignment with best practices. Where relevant, partner campuses may be asked to collaborate with California Volunteers staff in developing and delivering content-specific training for particular Focus Areas, e.g. training on high-impact tutoring for those Fellows serving in K-12 schools.

*32. Will California Volunteers support Fellow onboarding and training in other ways?*

Yes, CV will offer a number of statewide training, networking and professional development opportunities to build an esprit de corps for the statewide Fellowship cohort. All Fellows will be expected to participate in these statewide sessions. That said, college and university partners are expected to design and deliver customized orientation and training program for their own campus cohort.

## **Living Allowance (Stipend) Payments**

*33. How is the living allowance/ stipend categorized?*

The stipend is categorized as taxable income, not financial aid. However, based on AmeriCorps guidelines it should not be described as a salary or wage.

*34. Who should pay the stipend?*

The legal applicant (partner campus) is responsible for paying the stipend to all Fellows. Each partner campus will determine how best to pay the stipends to their Fellows in the way that maximizes the benefit of the stipend to the greatest number of students.

*35. Does the stipend affect a student's financial aid package?*

Because the stipend is defined as income, it can impact a student's financial aid. Campus partners are asked to work in close coordination with their Financial Aid office to mitigate any impact.

*36. Will AB 540-eligible Dreamers receive both the stipend and the Education Award?*

AB 540-eligible Dreamers will receive both the stipend and a Californians For All Education Award, fully funded by the state. The Californians For All Education Award will be administered by the California Student Aid Commission.

## **Education Award**

*37. Can the Education Award be used to cover the cost of on-campus housing? What else can it cover?*

Yes, the Education Award can be used to cover the Cost of Attendance as determined by the institution at a Title IV school, which may include tuition, books and supplies, transportation, room and board, and other expenses. In general, Fellows can use the Education Award to repay qualified student loans and pay current\* educational expenses at eligible schools and at certain GI Bill-approved educational programs for veterans. Eligible schools are higher educational institutions, both domestic and foreign, that currently participate in the Department of Education's Title IV student aid programs.

The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award can only be used to repay the qualified student loans listed below:

- Loans backed by the federal government under the Title IV of the Higher Education Act (except PLUS Loans to parents of students)
- Loans under Titles VII or VIII of the Public Service Health Act
- Loans made by a state agency, including state institutions of higher education.

Note: "Current" educational expenses are defined as expenses that a fellow incurred after the start of their service.

*38. How is the Education Award paid, and to whom?*

The Segal AmeriCorps Education Award is administered by the National Service Trust and payments are made directly to eligible schools at the request of the [AmeriCorps] Fellows. Fellows can manage their earned Education Award through the [MyAmeriCorps Portal](#). The Californians For All Education Award will be administered by the California Student Aid Commission. More information regarding the payment process will be shared at a later time.

## **Reporting Requirements**

*39. Can you clarify the reporting requirements? Will there be samples or templates?*

At the conclusion of the Planning and Program Development Phase (by June 1, 2022) each campus must be prepared to submit a *College Fellowship Implementation Plan* to California Volunteers including the following core elements (as detailed in the RFA):

- Program Logic Model
- Performance Measurement Targets (at least one student outcome and at least one community outcome, by Focus Area)
- Status Report on Fellow Recruitment (Actions taken, # of students recruited)
- Status Report on Host Organization Recruitment (Actions taken, # of partners committed)
- Regional Collaboration Plan (with other participating campuses in the region)
- Program Staffing Plan for Implementation Phase
- Fellow Training and Support Plan - \*campus cohort experience
- Community Host Partner Training and Support Plan
- Data Collection Plan
- Service Position Descriptions
- Operating Budget

For the Operating Phase, reporting requirements will include quarterly progress reports, as well as an annual program report at the conclusion of each Fellowship cohort. The annual program report will include final data on both the student outputs/outcomes and the community outputs/outcomes for that cohort. During the Planning and Program Development Phase, all college and university partners will work with California Volunteers to finalize their output and outcome metrics, which will be the basis for future reporting. Reporting templates and deadlines will be provided at a later date by California Volunteers.

*40. What needs to be reported to California Volunteers, and what needs to be reported directly to AmeriCorps?*

Selected college and university partners will only be submitting reports directly to California Volunteers. California Volunteers is responsible for reporting directly to AmeriCorps and will use the information provided by partner campuses to address reporting requirements for AmeriCorps.

## **Relationship to Civic Action Fellowship**

*41. Will the current Civic Action Fellowship be merged into the CaliforniansForAll College Fellowship, or can it continue to run concurrently?*

Current Civic Action Fellowship campus partners will have the following options to participate in the CaliforniansForAll College Fellowship:

- a) Apply for a grant under the CaliforniansFor All College Fellowship with the intent to expand their Civic Action program by folding it into the new College Fellowship. If their application is selected, the institution will receive a new grant award for the College Fellowship and will therefore opt OUT of the 2021-2022 Civic Action Fellowship continuation grant.



- b) Continue to run the Civic Action Fellowship for one more year through the 2021-2022 Civic Action Fellowship continuation grant, and then decide whether to wind down the program OR apply for additional resources for the Civic Action Fellowship via traditional AmeriCorps funding.
- c) IF the current Civic Action Fellowship on your campus clearly does not align with the required design elements of the new CaliforniansForAll College Fellowship, a partner campus may have the option to apply for this new funding opportunity, and then run the two Fellowship programs concurrently during the 2022-2023 academic year. California Volunteers will consider this exception on a case-by-case basis. Partner campuses that wish to pursue this option should consider the substantial difference in funding structure between the two Fellowship opportunities, which may impact student recruitment numbers and potentially cause confusion.